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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM: American Embassy MOSCOW — NO. 916

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. — DATE: April 13, 1962

APR 13 1962

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SUBJECT: Izvestiya Publishes "Letter" from Pre-1940 Latvian Foreign Minister

This despatch contains a summary and comments upon the "letter to the editors of Izvestiya from the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of bourgeois Latvia, Wilhelm MUNTERS", which appeared in the Soviet Government newspaper on April 7, 1962.

The conclusion reached is that, while the "letter" was undoubtedly designed in part to appeal for reconciliation of the Latvian emigration and the non-Party intelligentsia in Latvia to their country's permanent incorporation into the USSR, this is not a sufficient explanation for the prominence of its publication in Izvestiya and does not take account of other important aspects of its contents. The question of why the Soviet Government published this document at this time, in the medium and form in which it appears, remains unanswered.

* * * * * * * * * * *

In its issue of April 7, 1962, Izvestiya devotes a full page to the publication of a "letter to the editors of Izvestiya from the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of bourgeois Latvia, Wilhelm Munters." Munter's "letter", which bears the title "The Latvian People's Future Is Secure", is a well-written, reasonably argued, unpolemical dissertation on the theme of the permanence of Latvia's position as a constituent republic of the Soviet Union and the futility of believing this could be changed. Arguing against the Latvian emigration, Munters writes: "They do not want to understand that the social development of the Latvian peopl has not stopped, that it has been continuing under new conditions for more than twenty years already, that is, the same period of time that bourgeois Latvia existed, and that hopes for the restoration of the old order can only be cherished by the politically blind."

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Munters traces his own tribulations since 1940, when Latvia was absorbed by the USSR: he was first exiled to Voronezh, where he was permitted to work at the Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages. In 1941, he and his wife were arrested, sentenced to 25 years in prison, and imprisoned for "more than thirteen years". In 1954, Munters and his wife were released under the post-STALIN amnesty and allowed to live in Vladimir, in European Russia. In 1956-58, the couple was permitted to visit Latvia during the summer holidays and, in 1959, they were allowed to return to Riga, their home town, where Munters found work as a translator.

Munters then describes his impressions of Soviet Latvia, where he found many changes for the better -- although he admits at the end of the article that "not everything ... is as I think it should be and could be ...". Of the origin of the Latvian emigration, Munters says: "I think that partly it is the result of the excessively severe measures which were carried out in the Baltic Republics in 1940, not without the consent of Stalin, his closest associates and executors of his will". Again, when the Red Army returned on the heels of the retreating Germans in 1944, "among the emigres, or, rather, fugitives, there was a considerable number of people who were simply frightened, who left in fear of the 'Bolsheviks'. This fear was unfounded (today this is perfectly obvious); it was the result of stupidity, panic, psychosis. ... Only the emigre leaders and the more unscrupulous journalists of the West continue still today to raise a hullabaloo about the 'deportations', irrespective of the fact that all who had been banished unfoundedly returned long ago, down to amnestied legionaries and policemen who had served the Hitlerites."

Munters continues his reasonable discussion of the emigration, noting that the Baltic emigrants united with emigres from the "People's Democracies", "with the knowledge and, judging by everything, at the initiative of the American ruling circles", in "the so-called 'Assembly of Captive European Nations'". He names V. MASENS, "my former secretary and later chief of the Baltic and Western Department in the Ministry and member of the delegation to the League of Nations", as leader of the Latvian group in the ACEN, describing Masens as "a sensible diplomat". He warns that "emigration can only be viable when it defends progressive ideas, the ideas of the future, and not the moribund ideas of the past. Only if an emigre is linked with his people by living ties and keeps in step with the progressive movement of his nation, does he fight for a living cause." The "letter" does not, however, contain the usual Soviet invective against the emigration.

Munters then embarks on a consideration of the origins of World War II and Latvia's position during this period. He does not mention the MOLOTOV-RIBBENTROP Pact, but refers to the talks the British and French were conducting with the Soviet Government and accuses the British of simultaneously "conducting secret negotiations with Germany". "The first confirmation of the impending catastrophe came on September 1, 1939, when the Hitlerite troops unleashed their 'Blitzkrieg' against Poland. Thus, neither declarations, nor pacts, nor diplomatic maneuvers could assure peace in Europe and the aggression of Germany against Poland became the beginning of the Second World War."

A good part of Munters' argument revolves around the feasibility of a federation of the small states lying between Germany and the USSR, both in the pre-war period and now. He finds this a "dangerous fantasy" and adduces reasons for this

opinion from Latvia's history between the two wars and on the eve of World War II. He notes that "collective security proved ineffective even when it was hoped to create it in Europe alone". He says, "It would be harboring an illusion to hope that in the event of a world conflict between two gigantic camps the United Nations would be capable of preserving or restoring the peace." He therefore argues for disarmament on the basis of the Soviet draft treaty submitted at the Geneva 18-nation conference. He praises "the efforts of the great Soviet Union which is headed by so outstanding a leader as N. S. KHRUSHCHEV" (the only other living Soviet leader mentioned is MIKOYAN, whom Munters met when Latvia negotiated a trade treaty with the USSR in 1927).

Munters concludes his article with another criticism of Stalin's policy in Latvia, saying that the Latvian people took "the course of justice with conviction", i.e., voted to join the USSR, even at a time "when they were deprived of a portion of their vital power owing to distortions of the Leninist nationalities policy" and contending strongly that "everything that can possibly be done is being done in Latvia today ... for the restoration of justice, for the happiness of people. ... The Soviet system, which proved capable of converting old Russia into a modern great power, capable of wiping out illiteracy and solving the national problem -- this system could not have achieved these successes if it had not been based on justice". "I am convinced", he writes, "that the preservation of the vital forces of my people, their progress towards general welfare, peaceful existence and the necessary guarantees for that, are assured."

COMMENT: On its surface, Munters' article appears to be primarily a reasoned and detached appeal to two groups of people, the Latvian emigres and the non-Communist Latvian intelligentsia, designed to convince both that they should forget about Latvian independence and reconcile themselves to the facts of life, to a Latvia which for twenty years has been a Soviet Socialist Republic and will continue to be so in the future.

There are a number of reasons why this is not a completely satisfactory explanation of the article. First of all, the fact that the letter was addressed to the editors of Izvestiya and given a full page in that important central newspaper raises the possibility that the audience at which it is aimed is wider than a purely Latvian, Latvian-emigre, Baltic or Baltic-emigre, readership. Sovetskaya Litva and Sovetskaya Estoniya of April 8 both contain the Munters article, which does not appear in Sovetskaya Latviya until the following publishing day, April 10 (a delay no doubt to be explained by the desire of the Latvian authorities to publish the article simultaneously in Latvian translation in Cina, while, in Lithuania and Esthonia, the translation into the local languages could follow by one publishing day its appearance in the Russian-language daily). This absence of coordination between publication of the article in Izvestiya and its appearance in Sovetskaya Latviya makes it appear that the Soviet authorities, in commissioning the letter, were not primarily, or at least exclusively, concerned with appealing to the Latvian emigration and the non-Party Latvian intelligentsia. Indeed, the mere fact that the letter is addressed to the editors of Izvestiya lends it a stature which seems to exceed that which an appeal to so limited a group would require.

The likelihood that the letter was commissioned without taking into account the purely Latvian publishing requirements is substantiated by information given

the Embassy in confidence by an American correspondent in Moscow, who has regular contacts with a member of Izvestiya's staff. The American had a luncheon appointment with the Izvestiya man in the middle of the first week in April, but the latter called and broke the engagement, saying he had to go to Riga on an urgent matter. The American saw the Izvestiya man briefly following publication of the Munters letter and the Soviet correspondent said he had gone to Riga to help Munters write it. He did not volunteer further details.

Apart from its implicit appeal for a reconciliation of Latvians to their country's Sovietization, other principal aspects of the Munters article are, first, its argument against neutrality and the viability of an East Central European federation, and, second, its discreet criticism of Stalin's foreign policy on the eve of the German attack on the USSR and his treatment of the Baltic peoples then and when the Red Army re-occupied the area in 1944.

While Munters uses the charge that the British were secretely negotiating with the Germans as implicit justification for the Soviet-German deal of 1939, his article also contains statements about this period which do not coincide with the established Soviet line. The Second World War is treated as an event of truly Europe-wide significance, and not, more narrowly, as the "Great Fatherland War of the Soviet Union", which began only in 1941 with the "treacherous" attack of Nazi Germany on the USSR, loyal to the end in fulfilling its obligations under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Munters says flatly that the "German aggression against Poland was the beginning of the Second World War" and, in what may be understood as a veiled criticism of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, writes, "Thus, neither declarations, nor pacts, nor diplomatic maneuvers could assure peace in Europe."

Munters' dry description of his own personal fate after 1940; his criticism of the "excessively severe measures" applied by the Soviet authorities in the Baltic states in 1940, and his reference to the deportations conducted there following the re-establishment of Soviet authority, are clearly an effort to wipe the slate clean of the "errors" of the past. The effect of these passages is not essentially diminished by his statement, so clearly at variance with his own exile and imprisonment, that the fear Latvians had of the "Bolsheviks" was unfounded.

This aspect of Munters' article coincides with evidence of serious regime concern over Latvian, and Baltic, "nationalistic survivals", and with increased regime efforts since the XXII CPSU Congress to counteract nationalism throughout the minority areas of the country. In Latvia itself, the Minister of Culture, KALPIN, and the Minister of Education, KRUMIN, were released from their posts in January on the heels of much criticism from Party sources of "nationalistic perversions and mistakes" in these ministries and in the cultural life of the Republic generally. In addition to attacking the problem head-on through a lengthy series of public condemnations and warnings by local Party leaders, the regime can be understood as appealing for reconciliation, for letting bygones be bygones, to the non-Party intelligentsia in Latvia and the other two Baltic States through Munters, a respected member of the pre-Soviet Latvian Government.

The publication in the official journal of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, on April 6, of a decree repealing the award of decorations to high state-security officials for their part in the deportations of the North

Caucasian peoples in 1944 (Embassy's A-800, April 13), may represent another facet of this process.

But Munters addresses himself apparently only in passing to themes which might form part of an appeal to the emigration and the non-Party intelligentsia. The greater part of his letter is devoted to proving, on the basis of his own experiences as an official and, later, Foreign Minister, of the pre-1940 Latvian Government, the non-viability of an East Central European federation, stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic and from the German to the Soviet borders, and the illusoriness of neutrality, collective security, and the protection of the United Nations as safeguards for small nations in the present international situation and, a fortiori, in the event of a third, nuclear, world war.

Indeed, the impression is created that Munters has been selected to provide an authoritative rebuttal to persons who are arguing in favor of an East Central European federation and of neutrality. Since his letter is so long and carefully and reasonably argued and since it receives so much space in so important a Soviet newspaper, one can only wonder who these persons may be. Is it a question of certain sections of sophisticated public opinion in the Baltic States and possibly in the USSR, as well? Is the article directed to such groups in the "people's democracies"? Who are its real targets?

These are some of the questions that present themselves when Munters' letter is considered. There do not appear to be any good answers to them at the moment.

For the Ambassador:

R. T. Davies
First Secretary of Embassy

Enclosure:
Three (3) copies of translation of Munters' letter from "The Daily Review", APN, Moscow, April 9, 1962 (to Department only)

THE DAILY RE
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Vol. VIII, No. 84 (2029)
Monday, April 9, 1962

PART II

+ The Latvian People's Future Is Secure
(Izvestia, April 7. In full.)

Monday, April 9, 1962

THE LATVIAN PEOPLE'S FUTURE IS SECURE

Letter From Wilhelm Munters, Formerly Foreign Minister in Bourgeois Latvia, to the Izvestia Editorial Board

In the autumn of 1959, after an absence of nearly 20 years, I returned to Riga, the town of my birth, where I had spent the whole of my life with the exception of three years from 1915 to 1918. In those years I lived at first in Moscow, as a student of the Riga Polytechnical Institute that had been evacuated, and later in Leningrad as a junker of a military school and then, after the October Revolution, as an oiler at the Treugolnik Works.

Subsequently, I resumed my studies at the Latvian University and graduated from the chemical faculty in 1925. At the same time, from 1920 on I was employed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, regarding this work in the beginning only as a temporary means of earning my living. But, after graduating from the University, I continued to work in the ministry which I had become attached to and where I remained for 20 years, successively holding the posts of manager of a department, director of a department, and secretary-general.

In 1936, K.Ulmanis who had become President of the Latvian Republic appointed me to the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs. I had known Ulmanis since 1924 when he was chairman of the Latvian delegation to the negotiations on the customs union with Estonia, subsequently reorganised as the Committee on Economic Agreements. I was secretary to this delegation, and for more than 10 years I worked in close contact with K. Ulmanis.

On May 15, 1934 Ulmanis carried out a coup d'etat. Till 1936 he continued to be Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, at the same time keeping the portfolio of Minister of Foreign Affairs. I was then secretary-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and thanks to the confidence placed in me by Ulmanis actually managed all the work of the Ministry. Having become Minister of Foreign Affairs I held this post until June 1940, when the Latvian government resigned. Some time later Latvia joined the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

With my wife and children I was exiled to Voronezh. There I worked for about a year in the Teachers' Institute of Foreign Languages, and on June 26, 1941, I was arrested, and spent the next, 13-odd years in different prisons. My wife shared the same fate.

If I recall these events now, twenty years later, it is only because I want my readers to understand that we---my wife and I--have known much sorrow and that for 13 years I had the opportunity (true, not of my own choice) to ponder deeply and grievously overacountless number of questions concerning not only my own lot but, to a much greater extent, the destiny of my people, the Baltic peoples and their neighbours, European policy, the past and future of the old world, the new era that was coming.

When we were discharged in 1954, before the expiration of our term of 25 years of imprisonment, to which we had been sentenced by Beriya's men, we found ourselves by chance in the ancient town of Vladimir-on-Klyasma. At that time we were not yet given the right to return to our native Latvia for permanent residence, and we had to find work and begin life anew in a perfectly strange city.

This is not the place to go into details about our five years in Vladimir. I will just mention that I was employed as a translator at the well-known Vladimir Tractor Works, and my wife gave piano lessons in the children's music school and directed the amateur art activities at the Avtopribor Plant, and towards the end of the time she was in charge of a group of soloists in the amateur art circle at the Tractor Works.

While speaking of the "Vladimir period" in our lives I must mention the friendly and cordial attitude shown towards us by all Soviet people whom we met at work and privately. We had no illusions concerning our place of residence, we were prepared to be treated with suspicion or, at least, reserve. For we were people from "another world" and, with the exception of our short stay in Voronezh, absolute strangers to the Soviet reality; our views on life differed radically from the world outlook of our new associates; moreover, they all knew that we had been arrested.

In reality, however, we very soon became ordinary inhabitants of Vladimir, met with friendship and respect in the "tractor housing estate" which was known as the "Ridge," became acclimatised among our working comrades and to the living conditions in the town. Still now, recalling the years spent in Vladimir, we call them the "happy Vladimir times." Vladimir brought us back to life in society after 13 years of loneliness, Vladimir showed us the character of the Soviet Russian man and made us love him.

At present, when I recall the attitude to the Soviet Union cultivated in pre-Soviet Latvia, an attitude of mistrust combined with a feeling of imaginary superiority and fear, I feel ashamed of our narrow bourgeois world outlook of those bygone days.

The Latvian people (I mean precisely the people) have always striven to base their existence on three principles: the preservation of the vital forces of the nation, peace, and material prosperity. These three principles fully accord with the aspirations of the other peoples inhabiting the Soviet Union, and the ideas on which Soviet society rests. I soon had occasion to become convinced of this once and for all.

No matter how good things were in Vladimir, the homeland is a strong magnet. When, in 1959, we were freed from the restrictions concerning residence in Latvia, we returned to Riga at the first opportunity. It was not easy to part from Vladimir, moreover as I foresaw many difficulties which we would have to encounter in Latvia. I felt that we would not be able to become "at home" there so painlessly as we had done in Vladimir, that we might be regarded as "ci-devants" by some with suspicion, by others with anger, and by the majority with indifference.

Everyone can understand the eager curiosity with which a man returns after many years of absence, to the city where he spent his childhood, youth, the whole of his life, where he worked and met with joys and sorrows. I had been to Latvia for the summer holidays in 1956-58, and I already knew of the changes which had taken place in the life of my homeland. But the thought that we might not be wanted never left me. And so I returned to Riga.

In the centre of the city there are practically no changes, in a few places squares have appeared where the houses were bombed/shelled during the war. The building in which I had worked for twenty years is now occupied by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia. We were struck by the busy traffic, the large number of pedestrians, the many motorcars and trolley buses which had not been there before. The suburbs, on the other hand, had changed completely. New residential districts had sprung up there.

I was most of all amazed by the scope of the cultural life in Riga. The number of schools has increased. In addition to the university, the student body of which has grown 1.5-fold, as compared to the thirties, a polytechnical, medical and other institutes are functioning. An Academy of Sciences comprising numerous institutes has been founded. Many of the old professors told me that with regard to research, the conditions are far more favourable now than in old Latvia. The theatres, opera, ballet and cinemas cannot complain of empty houses. Book sales are far greater than those which I recall in the thirties. As an example I would like to mention that a translation of Gomer's "Iliad" published in an edition of 10,000 copies in the Latvian language was sold out in two days! Splendid geographical and ethnographical publications devoted to the past and present of the Latvian people are being issued.

At first, after our return to Riga, our time was given up to looking for work and resuming, alas, only a few acquaintances, to sad memories. At first I dreamed of rest, of a quiet contemplative life. But real life, and the swift turbulent Soviet reality in particular, demands the rejection of the habits of a recluse. I understood that I must not only live, but also feel, feel not only my own personal concerns, but everything that touches my fellow citizens, the whole of society.

I am glad that my forebodings proved to be wrong. Only a short time has passed since we returned to Riga, but we have both fallen into step with the new life, so different from that of the Riga of twenty years ago which I remember.

Working on translations for the Latvian State Publishing House and for the "Transactions" of the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian S.S.R., I frequently had to use the fundamental library of the Academy. Here I accidentally came across newspapers published by the Latvian emigres. It is easy to conceive with what excitement I picked up these foreign periodicals, published in the Latvian language, in which I met familiar names, the names of people whom I had known personally, with many of whom I had been linked by ties of friendship in bygone years.

How did the Latvian emigration arise? I think that partly it is the result of the excessively strict measures which were carried out in the Baltic Republics in 1940, not without the consent of Stalin, his closest associates and executors of his will. When in 1944, Hitler's troops retreated from the Baltic republics under the blows of the Soviet Army, many Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians left their homeland. Some of them feared retribution for cooperation with the occupation authorities. Others did it under the influence of the threats and persuasions of the Hitlerites. Still others -- the big factory owners, tradesmen, rich landowners -- did not want to reconcile themselves to the social changes. Among the emigres or, rather, fugitives, there was a considerable number of people who were simply frightened, who left in fear of the "Bolsheviks." This fear was unfounded (today this is perfectly obvious), it was the result of stupidity, panic, psychosis.

I have met many people who had every reason to be anxious about their fate after the return of the Soviet Army and, nevertheless, decided to remain at home. And what came of it? None of them suffered, with the exception of a few cases of short periods of arrest made to establish the activities of the given individual during the period of the German occupation.

Only the emigre leaders and the more unscrupulous journalists of the West continue still today to raise a hullabaloo about the "deportations," irrespective of the fact that all who had been banished unfoundedly returned long ago, down to amnestied legionaries and policemen who had served the Hitlerites.

When, in my free time, I acquainted myself step by step with the destinies and ideology of the emigres, I involuntarily recalled the past, the beginning of the thirties, when as a member of the Latvian delegation I first took part in the work of the League of Nations. The League of Nations sometimes occupied itself, among other things, with certain emigre problems, chiefly in connection with the decrepit Nansen organization, which, as is known, had been founded to help the Russian emigres but, as this question lost its urgency, it became a centre to which all the big and small affairs of the emigres of many nationalities were sent. I recall the unenviable fate of these people, about whom nobody really wanted to bother.

Already then I understood, and now I have been fully convinced, that emigration can only be viable when it defends progressive ideas, the ideas of the future, and not the moribund ideas of the past. Only if an emigre is linked with his people by living ties and keeps in step with the progressive movement of his nation, does he fight for a living cause; otherwise he is nothing but a splinter of the past which is gradually being buried under the sands of the tireless hourglass of history, the object and subject of memoirs.

When I pondered over the situation of the Latvian emigres, I found myself in the grip of sad thoughts. For they, my countrymen, in their great majority had left their homeland not for ideological convictions, but owing to fear or despair. The overwhelming majority of the people remained in their own country. But those who had left, were involuntarily obliged to seek a justification, to create some aim in life for themselves. And it is natural that this justification could only be found in hatred for the Soviet system, and the aim in the restoration of what had formerly existed. As a result of this, they found themselves tools in the hands of the foes of the Latvian people, of the enemies of the Soviet Union.

With the knowledge and, judging by everything, at the initiative of the American ruling circles, the emigres from the Baltic republics united with the emigres from the People's Democracies in the so-called "Assembly of Captive Nations of Europe."

I had the opportunity to see the printed organ of this Assembly, incidentally, the issue published on the occasion of the "Captive Nations Week" proclaimed annually in the month of July by the U.S. President in keeping with a resolution of Congress.

What does it speak of? Here is one of the most typical examples of the reasoning used by the leaders of the Assembly in connection with the so-called "Berlin crisis," reasoning which clearly expresses the thoughts of its organizers.

"In raising the question of the freedom and independence of the captive nations to the level of the political aim of the United States and its allies (my italics—W.M.), it would be possible at least to achieve the encouragement of hope and strengthening of the deterrent in the forthcoming decision (of the Berlin question)."

That is how the fine words about the United States' desire to defend the freedom of other nations look in fact! Everything is much simpler. The U.S.A. needs the emigres as small change in its political game.

One of the patrons of the "Assembly of Captive Nations of Europe" the American Senator Douglas, advises the emigres to begin preparations already now for the foundation of a Federation (after the "liberation" of Central and Eastern Europe), as otherwise "there is no future (my italics—W.M.) for the group of small countries with populations of 12, 20 and 30 millions, between two such mighty states as Germany and Russia.

It is too much to expect an American Senator to know the history of Europe during the past 25 years, but the representatives of the "captive nations" know it well. They know that their countries were pawns in the pre-war diplomatic game, that they were not reckoned with at all in the West. Has the leader of the Latvian group in the "Assembly," W.Masens, my former secretary and later chief of the Baltic and Western Department in the Ministry and member of the delegation to the League of Nations, really forgotten this? Has he, a sensible diplomat, and those who support him, really forgotten how the Baltic Federation died before it was born? And it would have included only some seven million people, hence it would have had "no future" according to Senator Douglas. Has Masens really forgotten how even such a modest undertaking as the Latvian-Estonian Customs Union was stillborn? And only because the Riga textile manufacturers could not come to terms with their Estonian associates, while the Tallin merchants were mortally afraid of the trade rivalry of Riga and its port.

Then what is the sense of striving for a Federation to reach from the Baltic to the Adriatic and the Black Sea? All this is fantasy, if nothing worse. Dangerous fantasy, for which the peoples of such a Federation would have to pay, as it would exist under the influence of a big power which would dictate its own will and policy. This approximately is how Hitler conceived the "New Europe," in which the "higher Aryan race" would rule. Yet Masens is already going so far as to call for a "global campaign against communism."

If the emigre leaders really still have any feeling for their peoples, and are not only concerned with their own well-being ensured by their munificent foreign patrons, they had better refrain from participation in the false game which did not, and does not promise to, win them the respect either of their own countrymen or the American people.

The social development of the Latvian nation under the conditions of independent statehood was of extremely short duration, it lasted for only about twenty years. During this period the Latvian people saw the insolvency of the bourgeois-democratic system which found its further, I would say, logical development in the authoritarian regime or the dictatorship of the individual.

Yet, to judge by the statements of the emigre press, they are not inclined to take a sober view of life. They do not want to understand that the social development of the Latvian people has not stopped, that it has been continuing under new conditions for more than twenty years already, that is, the same period of time that bourgeois Latvia existed, and that hopes for the restoration of the old order can only be cherished by the politically blind.

I am profoundly convinced that the small nations can ensure their future only in conditions of peace. For the big nations war may mean economic, material and cultural exhaustion, but for the small peoples it is nearly always destructive. Therefore, I have no doubt that just the small nations must be particularly interested in the preservation of peace. Peace will ensure them the chief thing--the preservation of the vital force of the people and the growth of their welfare.

The struggle for peace, the most important problem of the present day, did not arise in recent years. Already the first world war gave a strong impetus to the attempts to exclude war as a means of settling outstanding international issues and differences.

At that time disarmament conferences were convened, a special organ was founded at the League of Nations, a number of agreements were concluded to consolidate the security of the states. But none of these efforts were successful.

In the late thirties, when I began to attend regularly the annual Assemblies of the League of Nations, the problem of disarmament was practically no longer discussed. The Locarno Pact, the Geneva Protocol and the Kellog-Briand Pact--all that seemed to be in the faraway, and I would say, in the historic past. The United States kept out of the search of ways for the consolidation of the peace, Germany resigned from the League of Nations, Italy embarked upon the course of aggression against Abyssinia, Japan did not take part in the activities of the League of Nations and the system of the French allied treaties crumbled apart.

Then came the most shameful years in the life of the League of Nations, the years 1936-1938. It was in that very period that it fell to me, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, to represent my country in the Council of the League to which Latvia had been elected. The main duty of this organ, as recorded on paper, was to safeguard the peace among states, theoretically even with the use of force.

In the meantime, the avalanche of aggression moved on and on.... Spain. The Anschluss of Austria.... Czechoslovakia, Japan's aggression against China. The Council of the League of Nations recorded all those facts, adopting more or less respectable resolutions or half-hearted measures, as it had done at the time of Italy's attack on Abyssinia, or when it proclaimed "non-interference" in the civil war in Spain. I personally took part in the sub-committee which discussed Japan's aggression, and I clearly remember how Eden and the Chinese delegate Wellington Koo were debating formulations which had no real importance, inasmuch as there was no hope of anyone providing military aid against the aggressor. Presiding at the 101st session of the League of Nations Council, in May, 1936, I read the resolution which, in essence, amounted to recognition of Abyssinia's seizure by fascist Italy.

In all these cases of abetment of aggression, public opinion in the small neutral countries, Latvia included, was hostile towards the aggressor. But responsible leaders of these states were deliberately refraining from a clear condemnation of the predatory policies and kept silent, knowing that the Great Powers in the West were not inclined to adopt effective measures for safeguarding and restoring the peace.

It was in that situation that the tendency towards neutrality was born in the Northern and Baltic states. These states reached with great interest to the proposal to

guarantee their neutrality made by the Soviet Union during the tripartite negotiations with France and Britain. To the Baltic republics it was, of course, very desirable in 1938 to receive those guarantees bearing the signatures of the Soviet Union and Germany, with the participation of Britain and France. There was also another way out: a guarantee of neutrality by the U.S.S.R. alone, but that, in our opinion, would amount to a sort of a military pact providing for the one-sided aid of the Soviet Union in the event of Germany's breach of Baltic neutrality. And that seemed to the Baltic statesmen to be an undesirable political challenge to aggressive nazism which had already broken all restraints, to say nothing of Poland's refusal to participate in any arrangement involving the passage of Soviet troops. The talks were protracted, and the dramatic events of 1938 in Central Europe pushed them into the background. In 1939, the talks between the Soviet Union, Britain and France entered a new phase, while the wheel of war rolled on with increasing speed. At the end of May, Britain and France made new proposals of which we were not directly informed and in which the question of guarantees to the three Baltic republics considered essential by the Soviet Government was left open.

Along with the talks with Moscow, the British were conducting secret negotiations with Germany of which nothing definite was known to anyone. However, the very fact that the negotiations with Moscow and with Berlin were conducted at one and the same time was eloquent evidence to the effect that security in the East of Europe was still doubtful, if not threatened. Nervousness prevailed throughout Europe. The reports I was receiving from our diplomatic representatives in the Western capitals were varied and contradictory. No one knew anything definite and concrete, but everyone could feel that the international atmosphere was laden with clouds of an approaching storm from which lightning would flash at any moment.

The first confirmation of the impending catastrophe came on September 1, 1939 when the Hitlerite troops were thrust into their "Blitzkrieg" with Poland.

And so, neither declarations, nor pacts, nor diplomatic manoeuvres could ensure peace in Europe, and Germany's aggression against Poland became the beginning of the Second World War.

Even though they tried to keep out of the armed conflict, almost all the small countries of Europe were drawn into it, including the Baltic republics situated at the junction of two giants of the European continent, the Soviet Union and Germany.

For many ages, the Letts, just as the other Baltic peoples, existed merely as an ethnic unit, taking no part whatever in the administration of their country. Only beginning with the end of the 18th century, after the Baltic, or the Ostsee provinces, as they were called at that time, became part of the Russian empire, do we see the first tender shoots of national public life among the Letts. Prior to that they had no opportunity of being initiated into the culture of any great nation; of course, lacking that, they could not develop their own national culture, if only for the reason that they had no literary language and grammar of their own.

The Baltic German landlords, or barons, as they styled themselves and became known in the existing vocabulary, were least of all interested in the development of the national culture of the local peoples whose only mission, as they believed, was to supply serfs for use as labor power.

After the February Revolution of 1917, the Letts began an active struggle for national independence, and since the majority of the people lived at that time within the boundaries of the Russian Republic, it was held that national autonomy was the most acceptable solution at that time. However, the German offensive in the second half of 1917 (it will be remembered that Riga was occupied on September 3, 1917), on the one hand, and the October Revolution of 1917, on the other hand, brought about a radical change in the situation, and in 1918 we could already distinguish three trends of Latvian social thought: for joining the Federation of Soviet nations; for some sort of a union with Germany, and for an independent Latvian state.

Two republics were proclaimed at the junction of 1918 and 1919: a bourgeois republic on November 18, 1918, and somewhat later -- a Soviet Latvian Republic. Owing to developments obtaining at that time, the bourgeois government was able to remain in power in Latvia with the support of the Entente (Britain and France), but that did not mean that it had received final recognition from the Western powers. Only after the adventure of von der Holz and Bermont revealed to the Entente the fact that the German military in the East were pursuing a treacherous policy with the object of re-conquering the Baltic, only after the Latvian troops proved capable of dealing a smashing defeat to Bermont's German mercenaries, thus proving, in the opinion of the Western politicians, that they were "not infected by the Bolshevik spirit," only after the Red Army's victories over the Polish troops and after the conclusion of peace treaties by the Baltic states with Soviet Russia, were they recognized de jure by the rulers of Europe's destinies who were meeting in Paris.

The orientation towards the Western allies gained undivided prevalence in Latvia. Sober-minded political leaders of the Latvian republic understood that in essence the orientation in question lacked real ground, and that is why the Western orientation was gradually supplanted by the "Latvian" orientation; however, although the latter had a proud and independent ring, it was also devoid of real substance.

I was a witness and observer of those processes in the first years of my work in the Foreign Ministry. I could also see the Latvian leaders conduct an internal political struggle against the ideological influence of the ideas which were adopted as the basis of the Soviet state; at the same time, they could not but take account of the vast importance of the economic ties with their Eastern neighbor. I saw, on the other hand, the meaning of Latvia's trade with Germany, its growth was attended by the growth of the influence of German capital. I saw how the Latvian Government had to fight against the claims of the Baltic German minority which was conducting a bitter struggle against the agrarian reform and demanded cultural autonomy for the Germans in Latvia who appropriated the role of main mediary in the economic relations between Latvia and Germany.

In 1927, Latvia concluded a trade treaty with the Soviet Union. I took part in those talks as secretary of the Latvian delegation. The Soviet delegation was headed by Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan; that was the first time I had met one of the leaders of the Soviet Government in negotiations.

The negotiations produced a deep impression upon many of us, myself included, and we discussed among ourselves at length the desirability of closer economic ties with the Soviet Union, in order to lessen our dependence upon the Western markets, the German in the first place.

Came the fatal year 1933, a turning point in Europe's history, the beginning of Hitlerism's rule in Germany. Before long, that historic change made itself felt in the Baltic. The nazi politicians began to exploit Latvia's economic dependence upon the German market for political purposes, and, primarily, for strengthening the position of the German minority in Latvia which was rapidly united under the Hitlerite banner and Hitlerite slogans. And things did not stop at that. Encouraged by the successes of the nazi state and by the primitive slogans of the Hitlerite party, our home-grown fascists, or, as they called themselves, the "Perconcrustowists" began to stir their heads; formerly drawing inspiration from the Italian fascist anthem "Giovinezza," they now found palatable spiritual nutrition in the program of Hitler's party.

The question of Latvia's foreign policy trend acquired urgency again. As General Secretary of the Foreign Ministry, and later as Minister of Foreign Affairs, I tried to direct our foreign policy into the traditional channel inherited from the first years of Latvia's independent statehood, orientated towards the Western powers.

However, before long I realized that there was nothing to expect from there, inasmuch as France and Britain were not only incapable of adopting effective measures against the aggressive policy of the Third Reich, but they even adopted the course of appeasement in relation to it, intent on evading at any cost an armed conflict and to set Germany against the U.S.S.R. The Scandinavian countries, Finland and our ally Estonia -- they all kept on saying "neutrality, neutrality," which in essence was equivalent to an orientation towards Germany, the standard bearer of the doctrine of force.

In May, 1939 Latvia and Estonia accepted Germany's offer to conclude non-aggression pacts. We harboured no special illusions with regard to these pacts, but believed that Germany's undertaking under this pact could play some role, small though it might be, in strengthening our position in the face of the almost complete failure of the collective security system in the shape of the League of Nations pact.

However, after the failure of the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations in Moscow, our last hope for the assistance of the Western Powers in strengthening our neutrality, vanished completely. We were left alone.

There was no alternative. We made our choice by concluding mutual assistance pacts first with Estonia, and then with Latvia, Lithuania and the Soviet Union.

I must confess that it was not an easy choice and we made it under pressure of the circumstances obtaining at that time which left no alternative to us. In the early hours of October 5, 1939, the date when the Latvian-Soviet treaty was signed, I spent a long time with Kocins, our envoy in his office in our legation in Moscow, discussing whether we could recommend to our government to affix its signature to the text prepared by us during the talks with Stalin, Molotov and Potemkin. We realized that it was a turning point in Latvia's history, but we also realized that this was the only chance of safeguarding the existence of the Latvian people, of securing peace to it and preventing its being swallowed up by Germany. The signature of this treaty was accorded a more favorable reception than I had expected, both at home and abroad. And when, shortly after the conclusion of the treaty, the German Government announced its intention to repatriate the Baltic German minority to Germany, the public in Latvia breathed a sigh of relief, seeing in that move a result of the changed relations between the Baltic republics and the Soviet Union and a sign of Latvia's greater security against Hitlerite aggression.

But this aggression was continued in other directions, in order to be turned again in the direction of Eastern Europe later.

I shall not touch upon subsequent de... nts on the eve of the second world war and its history which are well known to Soviet readers.

It is enough to imagine what would have happened to the Latvian people if nazi Germany had been victorious in that war. If not the whole of Latvia, at any rate more than half her territory extending up to the Dangava, would have been colonized by the Germans, according to Rosenberg's plan, and the Latvian people would have to live in bondage, to say nothing of the fact that the section of the people who left the country together with the retreating Soviet Army would have been scattered over the vast expanses of the Soviet country without the hope of returning to the native region and for reunion with their countrymen.

The situation in the world today is much tenser than in the thirties. Not only Europe, but the whole world is divided in two camps, and a comparison is suggested with an electrophoric machine which keeps on rotating until a spark flashes between its disks. No insulation is of any avail here. The machine can be stopped, but time and life are not machines, they cannot be stopped. This means that some other way must be found for easing the tension; in the relations between states that can be accomplished only by disarmament.

Collective security proved ineffective already at the time when it was proposed for Europe only. An armed conflict today would inevitably involve the whole world. Collective security is, to a certain degree, the basis of the United Nations system, but it would be harbouring an illusion to hope that in the event of a world conflict between two gigantic camps the United Nations would be capable of preserving or restoring the peace. Hence the greater momentum acquired by the idea of disarmament the implementation of which would be able to avert an armed world catastrophe.

The disarmament problem has now entered its decisive phase. We know that several documents have already been tabled before the 18-Nation Committee in Geneva, and, primarily, the Draft Treaty on Disarmament submitted by the Soviet Government. On this occasion the chances of real progress are incomparably more favorable than 30-35 years ago. The peace-loving forces today are many times stronger, and thanks to the efforts of the great Soviet Union which is headed by so outstanding a leader as N.S. Khrushchov, these forces act with greater purposefulness than at that time. To the socialist camp disarmament is not an empty phrase. I know it, I have grasped the fact that to the Soviet Union and its friends disarmament is a question of principle emanating from the ideological flews of the Soviet society. However, in the capitalist camp, too, there is growing awareness of the colossal and irreparable consequences of an armed clash in the atomic age, and the bankruptcy of the strategy of "containment" is around the corner. All the small countries, all the newly founded states of Africa, all the neutralist states are vitally interested in the speedy implementation of disarmament, because their very existence would be imperilled by war.

Let us imagine for an instant prewar Latvia in the place of present-day Latvia. She too would have had to make her choice between the two camps, the socialist and the capitalist one. I have no doubt that the choice of the Latvian people would have been in favor of the socialist camp.

I grew up at a time when the existence of rich and poor, of masters and servants, of the powers that be and of the disinherited, was considered perfectly natural and pre-ordained by god. I remember the time when a socialist was considered a criminal guilty of high treason. Today, the overwhelming majority of reasoning people are socialists at heart. I say deliberately "at heart." One need not be a party member in order to be a socialist. A socialist one who is guided by an urge for justice. It is more important than the desire for well-being. The concept of well-being may be imbued with a different contents, but anyone can instinctively sense the meaning of justice. That is why this word comes so rarely off the lips of some statesmen: they do know that all mankind, and their own people in particular, are still far from the achievement of justice. However, the question as it stands is that of entering upon the course of justice by conviction and of conducting an uncompromising struggle against the manifestation of unjust views and conditions.

This is the course adopted by the Latvian people. Their first steps along this course were not easy. They entered upon this course twenty years later than the Soviet people: they entered upon this course in time of war and postwar ruin, and they were not responsible for the precipitation of the first, or for the outbreak of the second world wars; lastly, they entered upon this course, when they were deprived of a portion of their vital power owing to distortions of the Leninist national policy.

Everything that can possible be done is being done in Latvia today (and I see that with joy) for the restoration of justice, for the happiness of people. The colossal successes of the powerful Soviet Union in the economic, cultural and social spheres are so obvious today that even its ideological foes no longer dispute them. These successes are an earnest of the rapid progress of all the peoples inhabiting the U.S.S.R., of all the peoples who are building a new life. The Soviet system, which proved capable of converting old Russia into a modern great power, capable of wiping out illiteracy and solving the national problem, this system could not have achieved these successes if it had not been based on justice. I had known tsarist Russia, the Russia of 1917 and of the October Revolution, I had been to the Soviet Union on many occasions between 1925 and 1939, taking part in negotiations with the Soviet Government. I had known prewar Voronezh and postwar Vladimir, and I have now completed the circle in Riga. I do not conceal the fact that not everything in my native Latvia is as I think that it should and could be, and as it will undoubtedly be in conditions of Soviet life.

But I am convinced that the preservation of the vital forces of my people, their progress towards general welfare, peaceful existence and the necessary guarantees of that are assured.

W. MUNTERS

Riga, April, 1962

(Izvestia, April 7. In full.)

THE END